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CHILDREN OF OUR WILDS

by

LOU VILLINGER



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Courtesy of the U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey

“One golden evening in October the wild deer came to drink
at the stream.”

[Page 22]

CHILDREN *of* OUR WILDS

True Stories of Real Animals

By
LOU VILLINGER



BECKLEY-CARDY COMPANY
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Printed in the United States of America

DEC 15 1930

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TO GEORGE BELDEN

A LOVER OF NATURE

WHO GAVE ME THE STORY OF SPLIT-EAR

ABOUT THESE STORIES

This is a book of really true animal stories. Some of the animals I have known myself; of some of them my friends have told me.

As you read the stories of these children of our wilds, you will see how like human children they are. You will discover that they think and feel and act much as you do.

Look deep into the eyes of a wild animal and you will recognize there the lights of love and hate, joy and sorrow, courage and fear, longing and despair.

I hope you will enjoy these stories and that they will help you to a better understanding of the children of our wilds.

THE AUTHOR

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Children of Our Wilds



Photo by the Author

Ray named him Shooting Star

SHOOTING STAR

SHOOTING STAR is a mule-tail deer whose home is out West in our beautiful Yosemite Valley. He is strong and lithe and graceful, with long, forked antlers and swift, slender feet.

The very day that he was born, his lovely young mother was killed by a cruel mountain lion.

It was the Range Rider, Ray Green, who found Shooting Star when he was just a few hours old. He took the orphan baby in his strong arms and carried him home on his horse, Blue Boy, and for two years the Ranger and the young deer were pals.

Then one day, just as the second prong was sprouting on Star's new horns, he went away and joined the wild deer and for a long time he and the Ranger did not see each other.



Photo by the Author

Ray and Blue Boy liked to watch the sunrise together

But I must go back to the beginning and tell you this story just as the Ranger told it to me.

It was summer in Yosemite. Ray, the Ranger, was out on the trail at dawn that first morning in July. He and Blue Boy liked the trails best when the buttercups, meadowsweet and primroses filled the air with perfume as they held up their dainty cups to catch the morning dew.

That was the time the birds and squirrels and rabbits opened their sleepy eyes and came out of their hiding places. It was then the bears trotted out into the open and the deer came to drink at the crystal streams.

Ray and Blue Boy liked to watch the sunrise together. Sometimes it was at Mirror Lake they waited for the sun to creep up over Half Dome and dip his long slender fingers into the smooth water below. They knew that a few minutes later

he would roll his shining face over the rim of the mountain and smile down at himself in the great looking-glass that Mother Nature has placed in the heart of the wilds for her children.

And sometimes these two trail-mates would climb to some high peak and watch the sun paint the rainbow over the cliffs and waterfalls.

The morning our story begins—that first morning in July—Ray and Blue Boy were climbing the trail to Glacier Point. The hills along this trail are covered with brush and shrubbery.

One of the duties of a Ranger, you know, is to guard against fires. Every day Ray patrolled the trails to make sure that the summer visitors had put out their campfires and crushed their cigarettes.

It was this duty which took him to Glacier Point that day. About halfway up the mountain, Ray stopped to get a drink from

a spring which trickled down the hillside. All at once he heard a cry—the cry of a deer in pain. Blue Boy knew that sound, too. He pointed his ears and looked at Ray with understanding eyes. In a moment the Ranger was in the saddle.

Up the hillside he and Blue Boy hurried. Suddenly a spotted baby fawn came rolling down through the tangled brush and landed right in front of them. Blue Boy stopped short. Ray jumped from the saddle and took the wobbly little thing in his arms.

The frightened baby deer snuggled its velvet nose into Ray's neck and began to cry, its little heart beating wildly.

“Don't cry, don't cry, little one,” crooned Ray. “Your mother is around here somewhere. She'll find you, don't cry.”

But the mother did not come. With the fawn in his arms, Ray jumped into the

saddle and on up the hillside he and Blue Boy climbed. Finally they came to a tangled thicket. Ray parted the brush and what a sight met his eyes!

There she lay, wounded and bleeding. And disappearing through the brush went the sleek, tawny form of a mountain lion. Instantly Ray laid the fawn down and pulled his gun. Blue Boy knew just what to do. He dropped and rolled over on his side like a dead horse. Ray crouched behind him and with the sure shot of a Ranger, he sent a bullet into the heart of the enemy who carries off about one deer a week in the Yosemite.

The kind Ranger bathed the wounds of the dying doe and cooled her burning tongue with water from his canteen.

When the wild mother saw her baby beside her, a soft light came into her lovely eyes. With the last ounce of her strength, she lifted her head and licked the spotted



Photo by the Author

Star drank his milk from a bottle just like a baby coat proudly. Then the light went out of those beautiful eyes forever.

And that is how the Ranger and his

little wild brother found each other. Ray named him Shooting Star, but for short he called him just Star, because the white spots on his coat looked like tiny stars.

Many happy days followed this sad beginning, and many jolly good times Ray and Star and Blue Boy had together. Just like Mary and her lamb, you know—everywhere the Ranger went that deer was sure to go.

For the first four months of his life, Star drank his milk from a bottle just like a baby. His favorite way of taking it was standing on his hind feet with his fore feet hanging over Ray's hand.

When he was about six months old, the white spots disappeared and his coat changed from a reddish brown to a soft tan color. Then he began to want to eat everything. Every night and morning Ray gave him a big panful of bread and milk. And how he loved hot cakes! Once

he got into the cupboard and ate a whole plate of left-over hot cakes and all the vegetables, too. And once what do you think he did? He went into the bathroom and ate a big cake of soap!

Until he was six months old, he slept in the cabin on a bed of pine needles. Every morning when it was time for wild things to awaken, he would stretch his slender legs and bound right over on Ray's bed. And it didn't make any difference to him if he landed on top of his sleeping pal. Ray would cover up his head, but Star would nose his way under the covers, no matter how tightly they were tucked in.

Sometimes Ray would put him out of doors. When he wanted his breakfast, Star would run up and down, pounding the porch with his hoofs, until Ray opened the door.

As he grew older, he was full of mis-



© L. W. Brownell

Two little spike horns began to grow between his ears

chief. Finally Ray had to make him sleep in the barn at night. But Star loved Blue Boy and for two years they slept side by side just like two brothers. Often he would wrestle with the barn door for hours trying to get in.

When he was about a year old, two little spike horns began to grow between his ears just above his eyes. These horns were

a great delight to him and also a great help in opening the barn door. They made him look so funny and wise, with the little round knobs on them.

Shooting Star was growing up now. He like to wander off by himself and sometimes he was gone for hours. Often he would make friends with the wild deer that happened to come down to drink from the stream behind the cabin.

Ray could tell that he was getting restless. He knew that it wouldn't be long before Star would be leaving him to join his wild brothers. And so, on his second birthday, he bought the deer a collar. It was a wide strap with a silver buckle, on which was engraved "Shooting Star."

The deer was very proud of his new necklace and would toss his head and look at Ray as if to ask what it was all about. And Ray tried to make him understand that it was to protect him from the guns

of hunters, if he should ever wander outside the protection of the Yosemite Valley. But the deer would kick up his heels and bound away into the woods with never a worry about men and guns. And no wonder, for the only man he had ever known had been his first friend, so he had no fear of men.

One golden evening in October, the wild deer came to drink at the stream back of the Ranger's cabin. With them was a graceful young doe, more beautiful than the rest. Star saw her and a glad light came into his eyes. He watched her for a long time. Then with a leap and a bound he was at her side. Away they went and they did not return until the stars came out. When she left him, Star stood with his foot uplifted, gazing into the twilight after her. At sunset the next night he was waiting for her at the stream. And pretty soon she came.



Photo by the Author

A graceful young doe, more beautiful than the rest

*Photo by the Author*

Usually two baby fawns are born

Ray watched them from his cabin door. For a moment they looked at each other across the stream. Then Star waded in and swam over to her. Joyously they bounded away up the hillside. When Star heard Ray's long whistle, he turned and listened, then came back to the water's edge. That whistle had always brought him to the Ranger's side. For a while he looked at Ray. Presently on the still

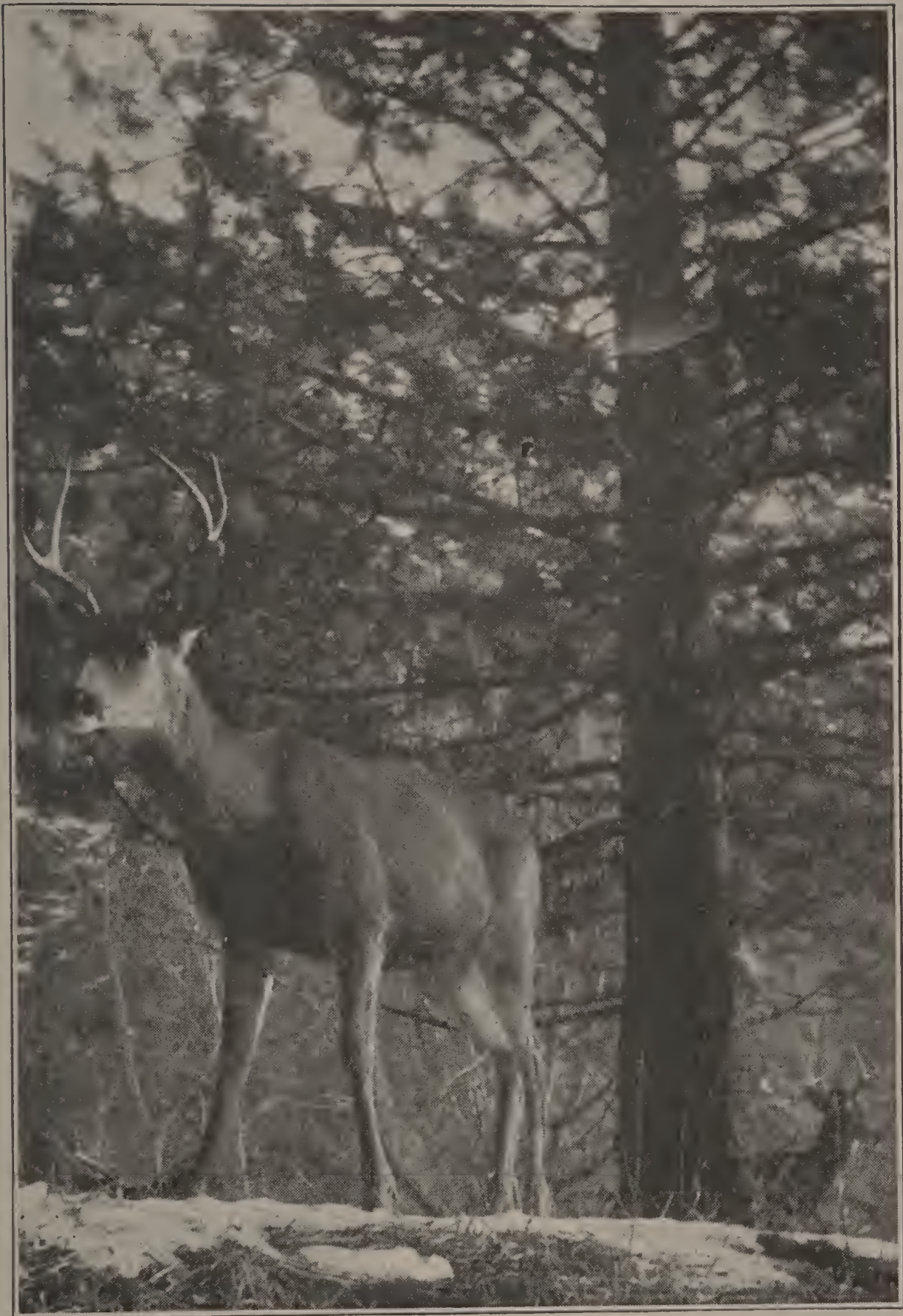


Photo by the Author

Star turned and listened

evening air came a call as of the bleating of a sheep. The wild doe was calling Star and his wild heart answered her. With a graceful bound he was off to join his beautiful mate of the woods.

For three years, Ray did not see him. Then one day—

But before you hear how they met again, let me tell you a few things about the ways of these timid wild creatures.

Baby fawns are born in the summer, in June or July. Usually there are two of them, though sometimes there is only one. As a rule the mother keeps her babies hidden the first few months until they are pretty well able to take care of themselves.

At first they are a lovely reddish brown and are covered with white spots. In a few months the spots disappear and the silky coat changes to a grayish tan.

When they are about four months old

they begin to eat the wild berries, tender grasses and young buds and branches of the trees. Usually the young deer run with their mother until they are nearly a year old.

The young fawns leave no odor in their tracks, so dogs and coyotes cannot trail them. Nature protects these wild babies in this way.

Deer have three different gaits, all of them stiff-legged. It is a lovely sight to see them walking through the woods, setting each foot down vertically. In the trot they sway from side to side. But it is the gallop they use as they bound away from the enemy.

If danger is near and several deer are together, they will usually separate and come together again when they think the danger is past.

Often, as they bound away through the brush, they will "flash" the tail as a signal



© L. W. Brownell

The under side of the mule-tail deer's tail is white

to other deer that danger is near. The under side of the tail is white, as you can see by this picture of the young doe, and, as the rest of the body is tan color, the white tail can easily be seen by the other deer and makes a very good danger flag.

The ears of the deer are long and pointed, something like a mule's ears. That is how the mule-tail gets his name. He has a keen sense of hearing and pays

more attention to noise than to motion.

If he sees an enemy he will often keep very still and not move till the danger is past. But if he hears a twig snap or any unusual noise, he is off with a bound.

He will often go back over his tracks to see if he is being followed.

The hoofs of the deer are very sharp. He uses them to fight with if he is attacked by dogs or coyotes, for they can cut like a knife.

The snow is one of the enemies of the deer in the winter, for he cannot walk on the crust of the snow, as other animals can, because his sharp hoofs cut through the crust. So in the winter the mule-tail deer stays down in the valley where the snow is not so deep.

He uses his hoofs to kill snakes with, too. He will circle around and around the snake until he sees his chance. Then he will strike very quickly and surely.



Courtesy of the U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey

The most interesting thing about the deer is his horns

The most interesting thing about the deer is his horns, or antlers. It is only the male deer that has horns.

In the spring when he is about a year old, two little spike horns begin to grow just above his eyes. These little spikes have knobs on them.

While the horns are growing they are covered with a thick skin called velvet.

This skin contains blood vessels which carry the blood to the horns and furnishes them with the materials which make them grow. These horns are not hollow like those of cattle but are of solid bone.

While the antlers are growing, they are very tender and easily hurt. The deer is careful of them at this time and stays mostly in the open so as not to rub them against the branches of the trees.

By August the antler is full-grown and is now sharp-pointed. Then the velvet dries up and drops off. Sometimes the deer gets rid of it by rubbing his antlers against the trees.

He keeps these horns through the mating season, which is the fall. At this time he is very fierce and uses his antlers to fight other bucks with, if they come near his mate. Often the bucks get their horns locked when they fight. Then they die of starvation and thirst.

After the mating season is over, in the late fall, the antlers are shed and through the winter the deer has no horns. In the spring they begin to grow again and their growth is very rapid.

Each year another branch, or tine, is added. You can tell the age of a deer by the number of tines on his horns.

By the end of the summer, the antlers have reached their growth. The deer is very proud of these long, branched horns and likes to display them to other bucks. As I have told you, he likes to fight with them, too. He will pin a dog to the ground with these strong horns, if the dog corners him.

And now you shall hear about the happy day when Ray and Star found each other again.

For a long time after Star left him, Ray watched each morning and evening, hoping that he would come back. And always

as he rode through the woods and over the trails, the Ranger looked for a deer with a collar which had a silver buckle on it. He never gave up hope that some day he would find his beloved Star.

One day in the Fall, three years later, he was riding through a timbered spot, when suddenly he realized that a buck was following him. Ray stopped, but he could not get a clear view of him. By and by the deer began circling around him. Nearer and nearer he came. Suddenly with a snort he leaped over a fallen log and stood facing his old friend, the Range Rider. For a second he sniffed the air, then came trotting up to Ray. What a meeting that was! Ray had a hard time to keep Star from pawing him and climbing on him, in his excitement and joy at seeing him.

But he managed to keep the deer at a safe distance until he was used to his

man friend again. Then, little by little, he came closer to Star and talked to him and patted the shining tan coat.

They stayed there together until the sun went down. When Ray left him, Star followed him to the edge of the clearing. As he disappeared around the bend, Ray turned to take a last look at his old pal. Star was standing there, foot uplifted as of old, straining his neck and gazing after the Ranger.

Only once since has Ray ever seen Shooting Star. It was one morning when he and Blue Boy were watching the sun rise at Mirror Lake.

Suddenly a shadow appeared on the surface of the beautiful water mirror that lies below Half Dome. It was the shadow of a deer and Ray could see that he wore a collar with a silver buckle on it.

The Ranger's gray eyes shone as he told me about his last glimpse of Star.

“The wind carried my scent across the Lake,” he explained, “and Star knows that scent from every other scent in the world.

“There he stood, his antlers lifted high, his keen nose sniffing the air. Blue Boy knew him, too, and gave a long whinny. I whistled and Star answered us. Across the Lake came that strange call that comes only from the heart of a wild deer.

“For awhile he stood watching us, then away he went, into the wooded hills, back to the free, wild life he loved.”

And the Ranger smiled his big, crooked smile.



© L. W. Brownell

Split-Ear is coal black all over except for a white spot on the tip-end of her nose

SPLIT-EAR

HOW would you like to land on top of a big black bear? I think you'd be scared! Well, so was Cappy Belden.

This is a really true bear story—every bit of it.

Away out west in California is Sequoia National Park. Great trees grow there. They are called "Giant Redwoods." Some

of them are thousands of years old and so tall you can't see the tops unless you lie down on your back and look up and up.

Their great, strong roots grow deep down into the earth and their green limbs stretch wide to the sunshine, the wind and the rain. Their trunks are straight and strong and beautiful.

Well, Cappy was bear hunting that summer in the Giant Forest. He wasn't hunting them to kill—Cappy didn't go hunting that way. He wanted to make movies of the bears to bring back and show the children, so they could see how bears live in the wet, wild woods. Cappy loves animals and he is not afraid of them, for he has studied their ways and knows how to make friends with them.

Most hunters take guns when they go bear hunting, but Cappy took honey. Doesn't that make you smile? He started out early that morning with his honey and

his movie camera. He walked and walked through ferns and underbrush, wading streams and climbing over great rocks and logs until he got away into the deep, dark forest.

Then he sat down under one of those big trees to rest; and before long the birds and squirrels and rabbits came out and began making friends with him.

At first they peeked shyly at him out of their scared little eyes. Then they began talking to him in animal language, coming nearer, as he answered them with chirps and squeaks and funny noises—all the time taking their pictures.

Pretty soon the birds were eating out of his hand, and the squirrels were running all over him, whisking their tails in his face and poking their sharp noses into his pockets for nuts. And the timid rabbits scampered about, shaking their little white powder puffs at him.

After he had played with the birds and squirrels and rabbits for a while, Cappy picked up his honey jar and his movie camera and went on to hunt bear.

By and by he came to a big log in his path. Little did he dream that an old black bear was asleep on the other side of that log, half buried under a pile of leaves.

Cappy climbed carefully up with his camera and his honey and looked around for a soft place to jump.

Then he saw the pile of leaves and—plump! he landed right on top of old Split-Ear's back!

It would be hard to tell which was the most scared, Cappy or Split-Ear. Up into the air shot that old bear and up bounced Cappy, like a big rubber ball. When Cappy came down, he started to run; and so did Split-Ear! You would have laughed to see them running away from each other.

After a while Cappy got over his scare and came back. He made up his mind he must have that old bear's picture.

He knew she'd be back if she smelled the honey and the meat sandwiches in his lunch kit. So he took the lid off the jar, put the honey and the sandwiches beside the log and went off a little way and hid behind a tree.

Well, as you know, bears love honey better than anything else in the world. After Cappy had waited a little while, he heard a rustling in the leaves. He peeked out from behind the tree with just one eye and there he saw Split-Ear coming, sniffing the air and looking all around carefully. Right up to the log she came and ate the sandwiches in about two shakes of her funny old tail. Then she found the honey and yum! yum! how she went for it. She put her paws into the jar and licked off the honey with her rough, red



Photo by the Author

She looked around and called again, "Umph! umph!"

tongue. When there wasn't a drop left, she spread her toes apart and licked them clean. Then she looked all around and grunted, "Umph! umph!" Maybe she was saying "Thank you."

Anyhow she looked all around and sniffed the air and called again, "Umph! umph!" And Cappy answered her this time. "Umph! umph!" he grunted and came out from behind the tree and took her picture beside the log.

Split-Ear is coal black all over except for a white spot on the tip end of her nose. If you look carefully, you will see it in the picture. It looks as if a snowflake had fallen there and forgotten to melt.

That was the beginning of the friendship between Cappy and old Split-Ear.

The next day Cappy came again with another jar of honey, and the next day, and the next. And every day for the rest of that summer Cappy and Split-Ear met at the old log.

At last summer was over and Cappy had to go home. Split-Ear didn't know why he brought her such an extra big jar of honey that last day, but she knew that he loved her. I am sure she did, for when he patted her shaggy coat, she looked at him with her soft black eyes and licked his face and laid her cold nose against his hand.

A year later Cappy went back to

Sequoia Park and some other movie men went with him. They wanted to take Split-Ear's picture, too. It was hard for them to believe that a man and a wild bear could really be friends.

"Split-Ear will know me by my white hair," said Cappy. So he took off his hat and went to the old log. There he found tracks he thought were hers. He waited a long time but she didn't come. Then he went deeper into the woods toward Split-Ear's den.

"Umph! umph!" he called and listened. "Umph! umph!" he called again.

Pretty soon, "Umph! umph!" he heard her answer, and in a minute she came trotting through the bushes. She jumped upon him like a big dog and nearly smothered him with her bear hugs and kisses. Just think! she knew him and she hadn't seen him for a whole year.

Then the strangest thing happened.

Suddenly she turned and trotted off into the trees. Could it be she was offended? Cappy couldn't understand.

Well, pretty soon, with much rustling of leaves, here she came back with two darling, roly-poly cubs trotting beside her. Would you believe it? She had gone back and got her babies to show to Cappy! Doesn't she look proud of those furry little fellows? Look how nicely she posed them for the picture.

Well, you never saw anything so full of pep as those two baby bears. They came right up to Cappy and began playing with him like fat little puppies. One of them got hold of his necktie and didn't they have fun! They both pulled till they got it off and then they had a tug of war. One little bear fell over backward when his brother let go suddenly.

Well, Cappy had promised the movie men to bring old Split-Ear out. So he got

*Photo by the Author*

She came back with two darling, roly-poly cubs

the honey jar and gave her and the cubs a taste. Then he coaxed them along until he got them out where the men were waiting. He warned them to keep a safe distance, for you know it is dangerous to come near a wild animal unless it knows you are its friend. When they had taken the picture of the cubs playing with Cap-py, one movie man said, "I am going to have my picture taken with the cubs, too."

“Better be careful,” warned Cappy. “Split-Ear doesn’t know you.”

“I’m not afraid,” said the movie man.

He took the honey and started toward Split-Ear, but he soon stopped, for suddenly a look of rage came into her eyes. She rose up on her hind legs, lifted her great paw and charged at him.

“Run! run!” shouted Cappy. “Hurry!”

And you would better believe he did run. Split-Ear would have clawed him to death if she could have caught him. When wild animals have young ones, they are very fierce and you cannot go near them unless they know you. Always remember that.

You may be sure that that movie man learned his lesson. He said he didn’t like bears, anyway.

And now you must hear about once when Cubby Bear got a spanking for not minding his mother. Perhaps it will make



© Underwood and Underwood

Split-Ear was teaching them to climb trees

you laugh, but Cubby Bear didn't laugh.

He sniffled and whined and cried for hours. But he had to learn that little bears, like little boys and girls, must mind their mothers.

This is the way it happened. Cappy was

late that day and the bears were there ahead of him. He saw Split-Ear a little way off. One cub was up in a tree and Split-Ear was trying to make his little brother go up, too. I suppose she was teaching them to climb trees. Anyway, Cubby Bear wouldn't go up that tree. His mother talked to him, but he paid no attention. She went over and tried to push him up, but he wouldn't go.

Finally, she took that naughty little bear in her strong, hairy arms, and my! how she spanked him! He howled and whined and begged, but she just kept on spanking, and when she let him go, you may believe he scaled up that tree in about one shake of his sore little tail. He didn't come down till his mother told him he could, either; and he didn't get any honey that day, for Split-Ear and the other little fellow ate it all up.

Cubby Bear sat up in the tree and

whined and cried the rest of the afternoon. Well, after a while Split-Ear let him come down, and when Cappy left them that day, the bears followed him clear to the edge of the woods. I'm glad that Split-Ear didn't know it was the last time she would ever see Cappy.

Now comes the end of the story and it is sad, but, you know, the end is often sad for wild animals. And so, since I promised to tell you a true story I must let you know what became of old Split-Ear.

A few weeks after Cappy went home, some men came and built a big hotel in Sequoia Park.

One night Split-Ear decided to find out about the big dark house that had suddenly grown up in her wild woods.

I suppose she had a curiosity about the strange man creatures, too, who whistled and hammered and filled the quiet forest with noise the whole day long. Maybe



© Ewing Galloway

This night Split-Ear went over to the new hotel

she thought she would find Cappy Belden among the man creatures.

Anyhow this night she went over to the new hotel to investigate. You know bears like to prowl at night.

The hotel was not quite finished and the workmen were sleeping on the floor. It was a warm night and they had left the

door open a little way. So, when Split-Ear came along, she just pushed it open and went in. She sniffed the men and walked right over some of them before they knew she was there.

Then, all at once, one man opened his eyes. When he saw that big, black bear standing there beside him, he gave a yell that wakened the other men, and, of course, there was a scramble. They took to their heels and ran, all but one man. He reached for the gun hanging on the wall.

Poor Split-Ear! If only Cappy had been there to tell him she didn't mean any harm. For a moment she stood there as if she wondered what it was all about. Then she turned her head toward the man with the gun. *Bang!* The bullet hit her between the eyes. She raised up on her hind legs and howled with pain. *Bang!* again, and this time the bullet went

straight into her great bear heart. With a moan she dropped to the floor and lay still. The man made a light and lifted the lids of her soft black eyes. Split-Ear was dead.

Sometime I hope you may visit the Giant Forest. In the hotel, in front of the fireplace, you will see a big bear rug, and you will know that it once was Split-Ear's coat, for the right ear is split all the way down.

It is possible, too, that in your wanderings through the forest in the neighborhood where Split-Ear had her home, you may meet two full-grown bears, once Split-Ear's dear little cubs.



© L. W. Brownell

Polar bears are splendid creatures

SNOW QUEEN

THIS is a story of the polar bear Snow Queen and her children, Jack Frost and Pink Tongue. It was told to me by a man who went to the Northland on an "ice-breaker." An ice-breaker is a ship which brings brave men to explore the land where the polar bear lives.

It is true that the land of snow and

ice is wonderful and thrilling, but it is dangerous and cruel, too. The men who go there must have brave hearts and strong bodies. Sometimes it is called the "Land of the Midnight Sun." That is because in the summer time the sun shines even at midnight.

Summer time is the happy time in the Northland. For a little while it grows warmer. The frozen ice fields break up into huge, swiftly moving blocks of ice. Great icebergs break off the ice mountains, which are called glaciers, and float for hundreds of miles in the blue Arctic sea.

The snow melts from the banks. The foxes and bears come out of their holes and eat the grass and tender roots and berries that grow and ripen as soon as the snow is gone. But the summer lasts only a few short weeks. Then comes winter, which lasts many long dark months.

The days grow shorter and shorter, the nights longer and longer, until at last the sun doesn't seem to rise there at all. For weeks and weeks it is one long night, with just a hint of daylight in the middle of the day.

At last comes spring again. The great yellow sun rolls up over the rim of the Arctic, and pushes his fingers further and further up into the Northern sky, bringing back the happy summer again to the Land of the Midnight Sun.

Before I tell you about Snow Queen and Pink Tongue and Jack Frost, I must tell you what splendid creatures polar bears are. And you will want to know something of their ways and find out some of their secrets, too.

The polar bear is King of the Northland, you know.

When he stands on his hind feet, he



Courtesy of the U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey

The polar bear's long neck helps him in swimming

looks like a great snow giant. Often he measures seven or eight feet from the end of his nose to the tip of his tail. And sometimes he weighs more than a thousand pounds! Just think how many boys and girls it would take to weigh a thousand pounds!

His thick fur coat protects him from the cold and is white all over.

The only spot on the polar bear that is not white is his nose. That is as black as though he had dipped it into an inkwell.

His broad feet are padded with long, thick hair, almost as thick as fur, which grows between his toes and on the soles of his feet. This makes it easy for him to walk on the ice without slipping.

His great feet are excellent paddles, too. You know the polar bear is the best swimmer of all the land animals. Though he is so heavy, he is wonderfully lithe in the water.

His long neck helps him in swimming, too. He can dive almost as well as a seal.

On the ends of his paws are long, sharp claws which he uses to catch seal and walrus and fish. Other bears hug their prey to death, but the polar bear kills his food with his sharp teeth and claws.

And do you know that he will not eat anything he catches until it is quite dead?

No matter how hungry he is, he waits until it stops wriggling. In this he is different from some other animals.

And now I shall tell you the secret of how he catches seal. He likes seal meat better than anything else.

The seal likes to come up on the ice to sleep and to breathe the fresh, cold air.

He knows that the polar bear is his enemy. So, before he takes a nap, he looks all around to see if there are any bears in sight. If everything is all right, he goes to sleep. He sleeps for about a minute. Then he wakes up, stretches his neck and looks all around and goes to sleep for another minute. And so he always sleeps for one minute and stays awake for two.

Mr. Bear is clever, too. He knows the ways of seals. When he spots Mr. Seal, he lays himself down close to the ice and covers his black nose with his paw. He knows that the seal cannot see him now,

all that can be seen is white, just like the snow.

While the seal is taking his one-minute nap, the bear trails along rapidly on his stomach toward him. As soon as the black head of the seal comes up, down goes the bear close to the ice. Quickly he covers his black nose with his big white paw and lies quite still. As soon as the black head of the seal goes down, you should see Mr. Bear zigzag his way over the ice.

Finally he gets near enough to pounce upon the poor seal and to bury his sharp claws in the soft flesh of the seal. So you see the bear outwits the seal.

He has another way of catching seals when they are in the water.

In winter they come up to breathe in the holes they have made when the ice was thin.

The bear finds the breathing-hole and lies quite still beside it. When the dark

shadow moves under the ice he crouches, ready to spring. The instant the black head fills the round opening, down comes the big paw and the poor seal is caught.

The polar bear is very intelligent. Sometimes he kills the walrus by dropping down great boulders or ice blocks upon him from above.

Just one thing more about the ways of the polar bear. Then comes the story.

When the short summer is over and autumn comes, Mrs. Bear gets sleepy. Then she and Mr. Bear leave the shore and together they go inland. He helps her to dig a deep hole in the snow. She lies down in this hole and Mr. Bear leaves her and goes back to the shore alone.

Then the snow falls from the dark sky and soon it covers Mrs. Bear like a soft white blanket.

All the long winter she sleeps there.

When Spring comes two tiny white cubs are beside her.

As soon as the snow melts the cubs get lively and will not let her sleep any longer. So she pushes her way out to the open, very thin and very hungry.

She has had nothing to eat all winter, you know. She has lived on the fat which was stored up in her great body.

And now comes the story of Snow Queen and her two cubs, Jack Frost and Pink Tongue.

It was Spring in the Land of the Midnight Sun. The ice was breaking. The snow was melting. The seabirds were hatching their young. The happy time had come again to the Northland.

Far back from the shore, deep under a blanket of snow, lay Snow Queen and her two tiny cubs, Jack Frost and Pink Tongue.

Warm and snug the little white fluff balls lay against the great, soft body of their mother.

One day Jack Frost woke up. He yawned and stretched himself. Then he rolled right over on top of Pink Tongue.

She began to whine and tried to push him away with her little soft paws. Jack Frost listened. He had never heard that sound before. Indeed it was the very first sound he had ever heard.

Presently something inside of him made him want to make that funny little noise too. So he tried it and found it was just as easy as anything.

So they both whined together. But Snow Queen slept on. By and by they opened their soft black eyes, looked at each other and rubbed noses.

Then they buried their little heads against Snow Queen's creamy fur and went after their dinner, just as puppies do.

Pretty soon when they had finished their meal, they began to get lively. They rolled each other over and over. They climbed up on Snow Queen's back and pulled at her with their baby paws. They licked her with their pink velvet tongues. Still Snow Queen slept on.

At last they put their little black noses close to her ear and whined and whined and whined. My! what a noise they made!

Snow Queen began to wake up. Slowly she opened her sleepy eyes. Then she raised her great head and looked at her new babies. And wasn't she proud of them!

She put her paws around them and held them close to her great bear heart—just as your mother sometimes holds you.

Then she began to dig her way out. Of course the fat little fluff balls followed her. The first lesson a little bear learns is to follow his mother.

At last they came out into the white world. They looked all around and blinked their eyes at the bright sun.

Poor Snow Queen! She was so thin and so hungry. You know she had had nothing to eat all winter.

The babies wanted to play, but she hurried them over to the nearest bank, where the snow had melted, and began eating the green grass and digging for the tender roots.

A little further on she found some bird's eggs and some baby birds. And she ate every one!

For several days she and the cubs traveled along. What a lot of things those little bears learned on the way. And they had lots of fun, too.

Once they came to a half-buried old shack. While their mother was nosing around trying to get inside, the cubs climbed up on the snow-covered roof and

slid down, just as you would have done.

Sometimes the silly little foxes would come out of their holes and yelp at them. And the little bears would chase them.

At night they slept in the snow, close to their mother's warm body.

And then, one day, they came to the shore. For the first time they saw the blue sea with its frozen, floating floor.

Snow Queen took them right out on the ice and they watched her catch fish and seal and walrus. And she didn't eat a bit until she fed them first.

She taught them how to lay low and how to cover their noses with their paws; how to dive and how to climb out on the ice floes again.

You know a baby polar bear can swim as soon as it is born. So Jack Frost and Pink Tongue were not afraid of the water. They went wherever Snow Queen went.

They chased the little fishes. They ran

games. And they played a funny little game. This is how they played it.

They would lie on their backs in the water and catch hold of their hind toes with their front feet and roll over and over and over, like little barrels.

I must also tell you about once when Snow Queen took them for a long, long swim.

They were far from shore that day, many miles from shore.

It happened that there were no ice floes for them to rest on. After a while the little bears got tired. And Snow Queen had to tow them home.

First one little bear would catch hold of her tail and she would tow him for a while. Then the other one would have a turn. Poor Snow Queen was glad to get them back to shore that day. It was hard work pulling the cubs through the water.



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Snow Queen and little Jack Frost

And now comes the thrilling part of the story.

One day a great ship came to the Northland. It was an ice-breaker which had brought some brave men from a far-away land to explore the Arctic wilds.

Well, the ship got frozen fast in the ice and was locked there for weeks. One day one of the men went out on the ice to spear seal. He was dressed in fur from head to foot.

He sat down near a breathing-hole to wait for the seal. Pretty soon Snow Queen saw him. I suppose she thought he was an animal, for he was covered with fur.

Anyway, Snow Queen and the cubs trailed themselves along on their stomachs toward the man. He had his back to them and they made a zigzag trail so as not to startle him.

Just as they were ready to pounce on him, a seal came by. Up jumped the man

with his spear raised in the air. At that minute he saw the bears.

Quick as a flash of light Snow Queen rose up on her hind feet and gathered the cubs to her breast. Her two great fore paws protecting them, she stood there and faced the danger bravely.

With a mighty leap the man threw aside the spear and ran for his life back to the ship.

A few days after the wind was blowing just right. Snow Queen and the cubs smelled walrus blubber, for the men on the ship had killed a walrus for their dogs.

Bears are very curious. They must find out about everything. And the smell of walrus blubber! They just had to follow that smell.

The men on the ship spied them through their telescope. Several of them took their guns, climbed into a small boat and started after the bears. You know, on a

trip to the North Land such as these men were making, food is scarce and must be carefully guarded.

When polar bears are alarmed they take to the water. So, when Snow Queen and the cubs saw them coming, they dove into the sea and swam for their lives.

From one ice floe to another they swam. The poor cubs got very tired. At last, when Snow Queen saw that they could swim no longer, she climbed out of the water. The little ones followed her and ran along on the ice as long as they could.

Poor little Pink Tongue! Her little legs got so tired she couldn't go any further. So she just sat right down on the ice. Then what do you think Snow Queen did? Why, she pushed her tired little baby with her great paws. She would give her a shove that would send the little one a long way. Jack Frost trotted bravely along beside his mother.

Closer and closer came Snow Queen's enemies. At last they were near enough to shoot. Poor Snow Queen! She rose up on her hind legs, uttered a terrible growl and tried to cover her children with her strong arms.

But it was too late. Down she came, with a pitiful moan.

And what do you think she did then? She put her great arms around her children and licked their little black noses. Then with the last ounce of her strength she raised up and pushed them into the water out of harm's reach.



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Scamper and some of the birds greet their friend

SCAMPER

SCAMPER is a gray squirrel. He lives in the park. I go to see him often and I call him my pet, but really he belongs to everybody.

I have a picture of him eating from the hand of one of his close friends, the very first time that I saw him. This elderly gentleman could often be seen feeding the squirrels and the birds in the park. They seemed to watch for his coming and the food which he always brought them.

Scamper runs and plays over many acres, but his nest, or home, is in a big oak tree which grows beside a tiny lake where ducks, swans and goldfish swim.

One day I went out to pay him a visit. I had not seen him for weeks and I was afraid he had forgotten me.

My little friend, Paulina Shell, went with me. Paulina is just two years old.



© L. W. Brownell

Scamper runs and plays over many acres

We walked around the lake looking in all the trees for Scamper. There were big squirrels and little squirrels, old squirrels and young squirrels, fat squirrels and skinny ones, but we could not find Scamper anywhere.

Paulina had a bag of peanuts and I had a sack of pine nuts. We sat down on the grass and tried to make friends with some of the young squirrels playing about.

They whisked and leaped over the grass

and chased the little sparrows who were taking their morning dust baths.

Paulina laughed and clapped her hands as one of the birds flew after a saucy young squirrel and chased him up a tree, where he hid among the leaves.

One little fellow found a striped paper bag. He took it in his front paws, which were just like little hands. He tore it open and poked his nose inside, then in went his whole head. When he found it was empty, he took the bag in those little striped hands and rolled over in the dust with it, just like a boy with a football.

By and by he came back. We tried to coax him over to us with the nuts which we held out to him. At last he came quite close and whisked his bushy tail and looked at us with his bright eyes, but he would not come within our reach. He took the peanut which Paulina threw him and, darting up the tree, sat up on his hind

legs. With his sharp, scissorlike teeth, he bit off the shell and ate the peanut.

Then back he came for more. This time he discovered that I had some pine nuts. Squirrels like pine nuts better than anything. Closer and closer he came to me. The bag was open on my lap but I did not offer him any of my pine nuts, for I was saving them for Scamper.

Well, pretty soon he slipped around behind me and, like a flash, he ran up my back and down over my shoulder into my lap. And before I could say "Jack Robinson," he caught up my bag of pine nuts and bounded away with it.

The little thief ran like the wind. We followed him and found a trail of pine nuts along his path. I am afraid the paper bag was about all he had left when he reached his nest in the tree.

Well, we got another bag of nuts from the gate man. Then we went over and

sat in the shade of the big oak where Scamper lives. Paulina kept calling him in her soft baby voice. Presently she picked up a little stick and held it to her lips and sang a little tune.

“If I play flute music, maybe Scamper will come,” she lisped.

“Maybe he will, dear,” I laughed, “for animals love music, they say.”

And, sure enough, in a moment he came. First I saw the shiny black eyes peeking at us from behind the tree. Paulina kept on playing her “flute music,” as she called it, for she had not yet discovered him. I reached quickly for my camera. I wanted a picture of Scamper and little Paulina, to send along with this story.

Suddenly the little rogue frisked himself up on the log and curled his silver-gray tail over his back. He looked so cunning as he sat up on his hind feet and held his front paws together, just as if

he were clapping his little hands. Quick as a wink, I snapped the picture.

I knew it was Scamper, for he is larger than any of the other squirrels of the park. He is old and battle-scarred, too.

I think he must have been in many fights, for in several places the fur is gone and he has two deep scars. His soft coat is brownish gray and underneath he is creamy white. His dainty, striped paws are tipped with black, curved claws.

I shook my bag of pine nuts and he came toward me with a flying leap. Up and down he ran, all over me. After he had eaten all the nuts he could hold, he began to store them away in his pockets. You know a squirrel's pockets are in his cheeks. When his pockets were filled, he would scamper away and bury the nuts under the leaves. Then back he would come for more.

Once I hid the bag in my coat pocket.



Photo by the Author

Suddenly the little rogue frisked himself up on a log



Courtesy of the U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey

Who should come creeping slyly toward us but the young rascal

When he came back, he whisked all over me looking for it. Finally he found it. Right into my pocket he dove and opened the bag and helped himself.

And then what do you think happened? Who should come creeping slyly toward us but the young rascal who had stolen my bag of pine nuts a little while before!

I knew him in a minute and I waited to see what would happen.

Scamper must have seen him. But he went on eating and did not seem to notice him. The saucy fellow came closer. Finally he ran up and perched himself on my shoulder. I saw Scamper bristle, but I was not prepared for what was about to happen.

Slyly the other squirrel crept down into my lap, watching old Scamper every second. Suddenly, without warning, Scamper pounced upon him.

Such a fight as they had, right there on my lap! I did not like it at all. I tried to shake them off, but I could not. They fought so fiercely and so fast that all I could see was a ball of fur and two gray tails flying up in my face.

I am glad to say the fight did not last long, for the young one was no match for old Scamper. He fought bravely, but

he soon got the worst of it. All at once, with a squeal and a bound, he threw himself free of the old warrior and shot away.

Scamper went on filling his pockets as if nothing had happened. Then away he would scurry and bury the nuts under the leaves. I wonder if he remembered where his pantry was, when he got hungry again?

Paulina and I left the little busybody there, hiding his pine nuts. When we said good-by to him, he whisked his silver tail and blinked his bright eyes at us as if to say, "Come again."



Courtesy of the U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey

Satin Coat would take a few nibbles of tender bark from the new young trees

SATIN COAT

AWAY up north, in the wilds of Canada, lived Satin Coat and his beaver family. Their lodge stood in the middle of a quiet pond which they themselves had made by damming up the stream.

Satin Coat loved his mother and father dearly. And his brothers and sisters too. The first year there had been just the six of them, the parents and four young-

sters. Then came April, and three children had been added to the family. And now, along came four more whining little beaver kittens.

The lodge had been so crowded since the new ones had come, that Father Beaver and the older children had had to sleep in the bank burrows near by.

Of course they didn't mind that so much. It was rather pleasant after the long winter months when they had been sealed up in the dark mud-house. It was like camping out in vacation.

But it was summer now and Satin Coat was getting restless. Something inside was calling him. Or maybe it was something out there along the banks of the winding stream that ran away and away as far as his small black eyes could see.

He began to take short trips away from the quiet home pond and every day he went further and further up the stream.

But each night found him with his family again, for a beaver's family is precious to him and his home is the dearest spot on earth.

Satin Coat's mother was busy with the younger children now, and anyway, his father had made him understand that there would be too many mouths to feed next winter. Everything depends on the food supply in a beaver colony.

So one summer morning Satin Coat got up very early, just as the first gray light filtered through the trees. He took a long swim around and around the home where he had lived for the two happy years of his life.

Then he pointed his nose toward the breeze to see if there was any man taint in the air. You know that beavers are born with the fear of man in their hearts. Satin Coat lifted his small round ears and listened a moment. Those little ears of

his know the meaning of every sound. But not even the birds were up yet and not another animal had opened its sleepy eyes.

So he swam to shore and shook the water drops from his thick brown fur and combed it out with that funny, split, second toe of his, that must have been put on his hind foot for just that purpose.

After a few nibbles of tender bark from the new young trees, he started on his way. I wonder if he knew he would never come back, or if he just followed that inner call with which wild things seem to be born?

Anyway he went farther that day than he had ever gone before. That night he did not come home, but slept in a burrow in the bank of the stream he had followed all day.

In the morning he breakfasted on tender birch bark and delicious water plants.

Then he explored the nearby woods, keeping always close to the friendly stream. Beavers cannot travel very fast on land, so they stay near the water. They dive with a loud slap of their broad, flat tails, and in an instant they are hidden. Some people say they slap the water as a signal to warn other beavers of danger.

By and by, as *Satin Coat* went nosing along through the brush and trees, he came to a stump that had beaver scent on it.

Beavers have two scent pouches under their flat, scaly tails. As they go through the woods, they take the scent, mix it with mud and put little pats of it on the stumps and trees, as a signal to other beavers. Perhaps it is to mark the way. Or it may be a love token.

Anyhow, when *Satin Coat* found that scent, he hurried on. All day he followed it from tree to stump, from stump to

tree. Just as the sun went down he came to a pond where another colony of beavers lived.

And there, swimming silently along the shore, was a beautiful young beaver who seemed to be waiting for him. She and Satin Coat rubbed noses and talked in beaver language. Then they swam away together in the summer twilight.

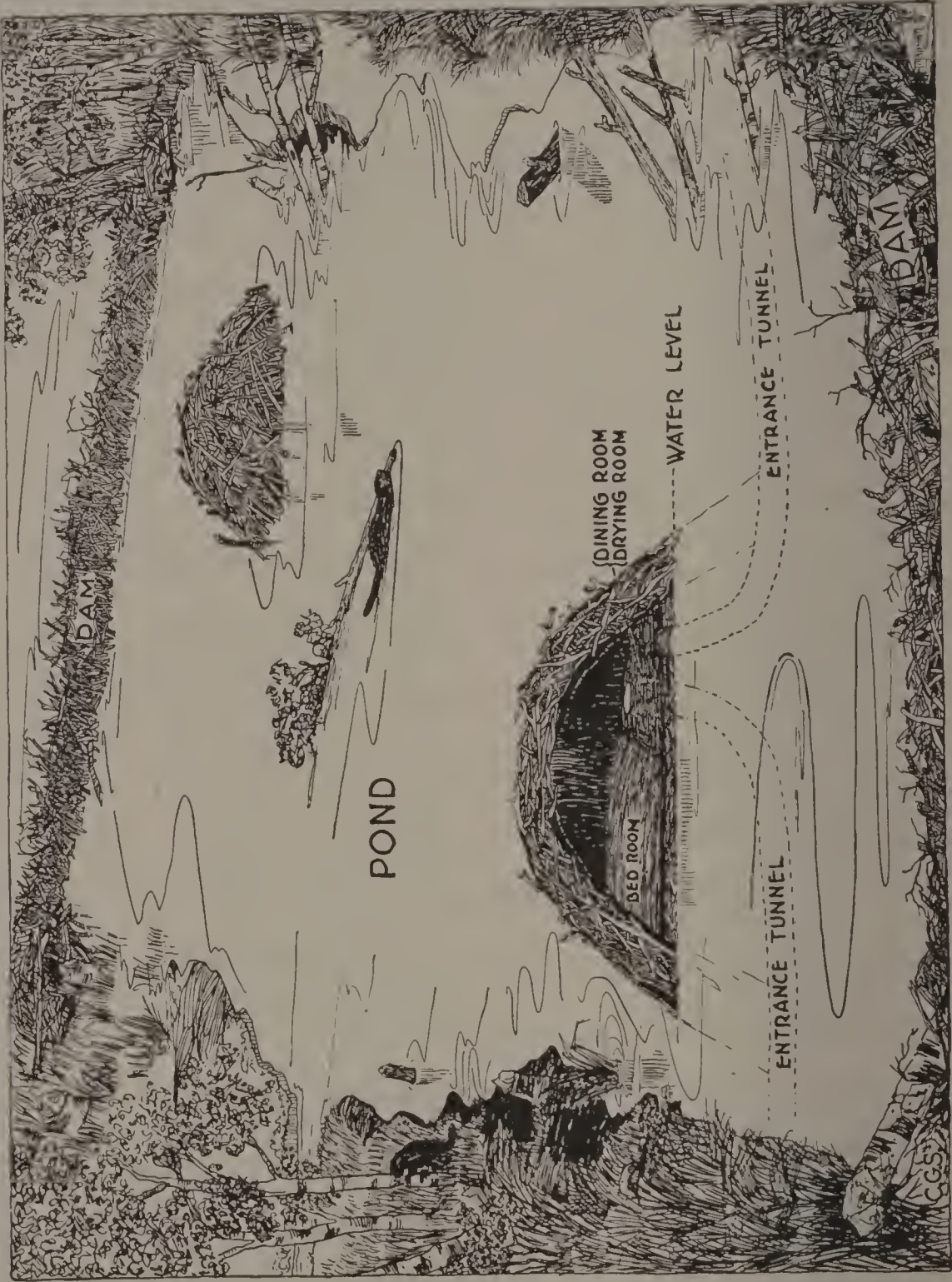
The spot they selected for their home was the same pond in which Satin Coat found his lovely mate. Shall we call her Silky?

Next day, when they came swimming in together, her family looked him over, rubbed noses and seemed to be pleased with the new brother.

How busy the young beavers were those first happy weeks! They began at once to build their lodge, for it was the end of August now. Soon they would begin cutting and storing the winter food supply,

and always there was work to be done on the dam. It was every beaver's job to keep the dams repaired and, day by day, to keep adding to them, making them stronger and higher. If a beaver finds a hole in the dam, he dives down to the bottom of the pond and brings up some mud and sod and, with his front paws, he puts it into the break and plasters up the hole. Some people think the beaver plasters the mud on with his tail, but men who have watched beavers work, say they do it with their front feet, or paws, which are just like little hands.

The dams are made of brush and branches of trees laid lengthwise, butts up-stream, with the current. To this they add sod, roots, stones and grass. This makes the foundation firm. They keep adding to this until the dam extends across the stream. In winter the mud freezes and makes it water-tight, just like



A beaver pond and colony

cement. As long as a beaver colony lives in a pond, its members are working to increase the strength of the dams. The water between the two dams forms the pond.

They often have extra dams besides the two main ones which form the pond. This is in case of floods or unexpected trouble.

Some people wonder why they have the pond around their homes and why they need the dams. There are several good reasons. They must have the pond to hide the entrances to their houses. You see, the land animals are their enemies. So they must conceal the entrances to their homes under water. I will tell you about the lodges later.

Another reason for the pond is to have a place to store the winter food supply. They use the bark of the birch, alder, maple, spruce and willow for food.

After the bark is eaten, the wood is

shredded and used in the lodge for bedding.

They store great piles of these trees in the water near the lodge. First they fell the trees and strip them of their branches. Then they cut them into convenient lengths, usually about three feet. They float these to the chosen spot and anchor them under the water. In winter they swim out under the ice and cut off the bark and take it into their houses and eat it. They can stay under water only about ten minutes. That is why they take the food into the lodge and eat it there.

The pond is also a good place of retreat in case of attack.

So you see that they must have the pond and it must be kept at an even level all the year round. Of course the dams make the pond. That is why the dams are their most important work. Don't you think they are clever little engineers?

And now we must get back to Satin Coat and Silky and watch them build that wonderful lodge that is to be their home.

The house is always placed either on the bank or on the island. Satin Coat and Silky liked the island best. Possibly they chose it because it was near the other island where Silky's family lived.

I must tell you that these two young beavers made their house themselves. Every beaver in the colony works on the dam, but they seem to understand that the home is a family affair. And they never make the mistake of getting into the wrong house, either.

First they burrowed the two entrance tunnels about three or four inches under water. There are always two or more of these tunnels that lead into the floor of the house. That is so that in case any unexpected visitor gets in, they can make a quick retreat. Once in a while an otter

does find his way into a beaver's home and the beavers make their escape through the tunnels and swim away under the ice.

These tunnels lead into the space to be used for the dining room and drying-off room. The floor is covered with grass and shredded wood.

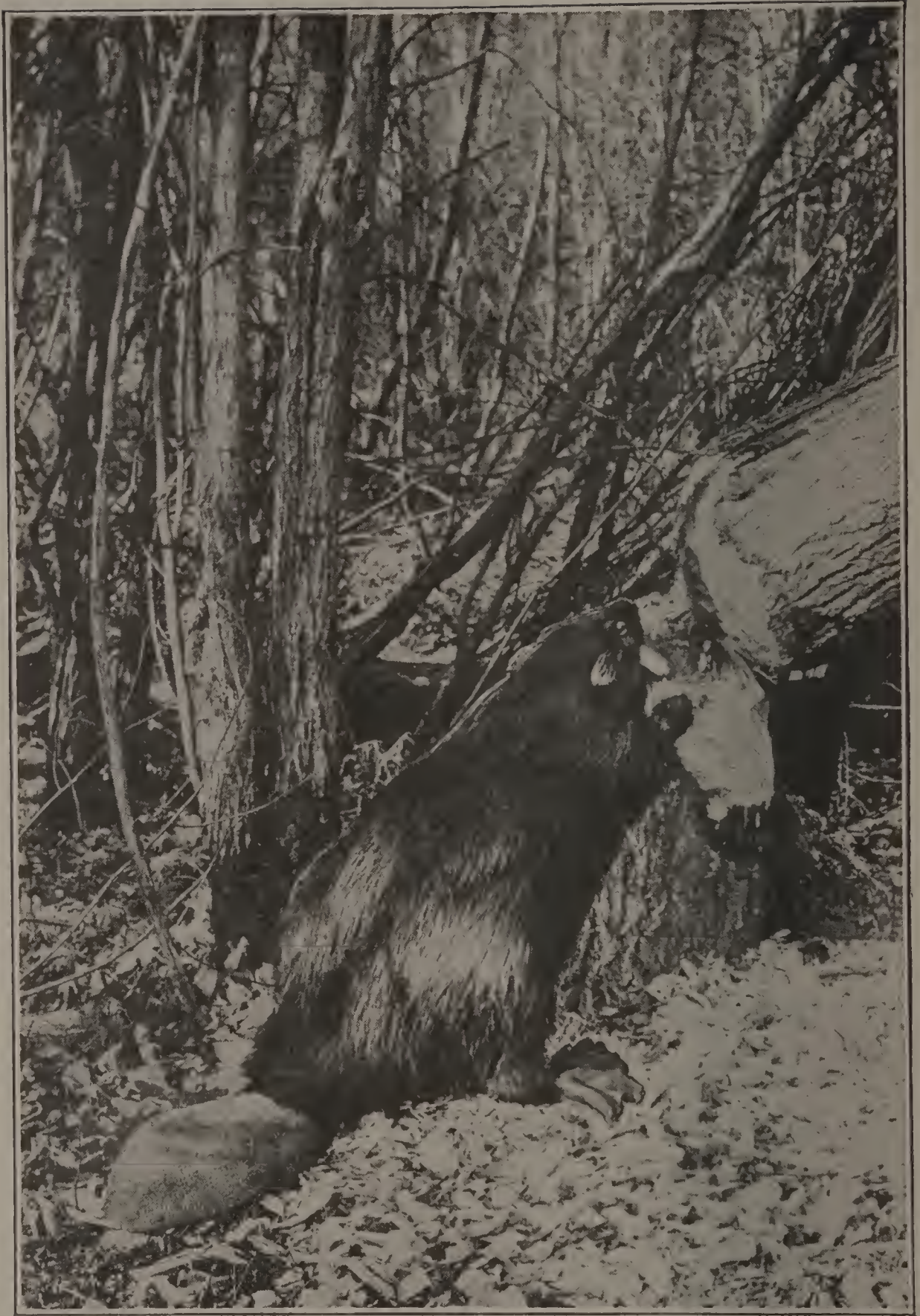
There is another room under the rounded dome that is used as the sleeping-room. The floor of this room is raised several inches higher than that of the dining room. It is padded with thick layers of shredded wood, which makes it soft and dry. Some people say there are walls between the two rooms, but that is not true. The floor of the sleeping room is simply built up a few inches higher.

The beavers are very good housekeepers. Several times during the winter they carry out the old bedding and bring in new. They dry themselves off before going into the sleeping-room.

To make the dome, or covering, of the house, *Satin Coat* and *Silky* brought many loads of brush and twigs and branches. How cleverly the little creatures twined and interlaced them together! Then they filled in the small open spaces with moss and grass and sod. They did not forget to leave a little air hole for fresh air to come in near the top.

By the time the house was built, the frost had covered the ground with the first thin white veils. It was October now and the busiest season of the year for the beavers. Soon the woods would be wrapped in a snow blanket and the streams would be covered with ice.

Here, there and everywhere scurried the beavers. *Satin Coat* and *Silky* were busy putting on the coat of mud over their brush house. They knew that when the mud froze they would be as safe and warm as if they were in a cement house.



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Some of the beavers felled the trees

As soon as the house was done, the two young beavers helped to gather in the winter food supply. Some of the beavers felled the trees, others stripped off the branches and others cut them into convenient lengths for carrying. Then they dragged or carried them to the water and floated them to the spot chosen as the storehouse. They knew just how to place the wood so as to be able to get it most conveniently when they wanted it later.

And now the little fur-bearers were ready for winter. The dams were high and strong. The mud-plastered houses were supplied with thickly padded floors. There were great piles of alders, spruce, birch and willow, whose bark would feed them through the months that they would be prisoners of ice and snow.

And just in time! One morning a week later Satin Coat and Silky awoke to find a frozen world!

They took their swim under the ice that morning, and carried their breakfast of bark into their dining room and ate it. Then they crept back into their cozy corner and went to sleep again. It was so good to rest after those weeks of hard work.

And there we will leave them, happy and warm and safe. Safe from the howling wolves and slinking foxes and hungry wolverine. Safe from the wicked steel trap, more cruel than their wild enemies. Safe to rest and dream of the happy spring when the new little Satin Coats will lie by Silky's side and learn, from their proud parents, the wisdom of the beavers.

STICKERS

FAR away on the Pacific Coast in the woods of Oregon lives Stickers, the porcupine. He is an ugly little fellow, about the size of a large Persian cat, but instead of fur, he is covered with long quills which grow, partly hidden, in the grayish brown hair of his body and tail.

On the end of each of these tiny swords is a little barblike arrow head. This makes it very hard to get these painful little weapons out, once they get into the enemy's soft flesh.

The strange thing about this odd woodland creature is the way he can loosen these queer slim needles and use them to defend himself when he is attacked.

Some folks think that he throws his quills or shoots them at his enemies, but those who have studied his ways say that is not true.

In case of attack he bristles himself out, the quills sticking out in every direction, from his body and tail. If the intruder touches the quills, even ever so lightly, the porcupine releases them instantly and they lodge themselves in the tormentor's flesh. Fortunately for the porcupine, new quills grow where the old ones fall out, just like new hair grows.

The porcupine has few foes among the wild folk. They seem to understand that it is best to give him plenty of room. I am sorry to say that men and dogs cause most of his trouble.

The odd little creature doesn't seem to have the intelligence of the average animal. There is so little space for brain in his short, pointed head. But he knows that he has some wonderful little weapons of defense and he uses them expertly when he needs them.

There are several kinds of porcupines



© *Publishers' Photo Service*

The porcupine is covered with long quills

in the different parts of our country, but they all have the quills and about the same habits.

In Canada and Mexico the hair grows so long that it often trails on the ground.

This little animal lives in trees and hollow logs and eats woodland plants, tender roots, grasses and wild berries.

And now comes the story of Stickers. It is a really true story about a porcupine, a dog, a black, woolly lamb, and three children who live on a ranch in southeastern Oregon.

The children's Aunt Emma told me this story and I will tell it to you in her very own words, as nearly as I can remember them.

“Phil and Roland and Betty Jean were all born in the big ranch house a few miles from the woods that skirt the broad acres known as ‘*Three Pines Ranch*.’

“Phil and Roland were ten at the time of this story. They are twins, you see. Betty Jean was just four.

“What jolly good times the children had together! The boys each had a dog and a pony, and Betty Jean had a pet lamb, which an old sheep herder had given her when it was just a few days old.

“The boys rode Pinto, one of the ponies, to school every day, and, as they had to go through the woods, they learned many things about the little hidden creatures who live there.

“I hadn’t seen the twins since they were six, and I had never laid eyes on Betty Jean.

“One day I received a letter from the boys inviting me up to the *Three Pines* to spend my vacation.

“‘Do come, Aunt Emma, please,’ the boys begged. ‘We haven’t seen you for such a long time and you’ve *never* seen

our darling Betty Jean. We'll go fishing and horseback riding and picnicking and everything. You just *must* come.'

"There were such funny scribbles and crosses and circles at the end of that letter, that it made me homesick for those children. The boys said Betty Jean made the scribbles.

"Well, anyhow, I just packed my bag and took the train for Oregon that very evening."

(I forgot to tell you that Aunt Emma lives in California.)

"I thought that train would never get there, but finally we pulled into the little station," she went on.

How she laughed as she told me about that meeting.

"There were Mother and Dad, the twins, with their two dogs, Bob and Champ, Betty Jean and Sambo, the pet lamb. Sambo," she added "is black as ink from the

end of his nose to the tip of his long woolly tail.

“It was a great welcome I got from that happy family,” laughed Aunt Emma.

“We had supper and then we talked and talked about all the things that had happened since I had seen them. Then the boys said that they had planned a picnic for the next day. So we all went to bed early, in order to get an early start for the picnic in the morning.

“What a jolly lot it was that crowded into the little old automobile the next day!

“Mother and Dad and the lunch in front, the twins, Betty Jean and Sambo and I in the back seat. The dogs rode on the running board.

“Bob was Phil’s dog, a big black-and-tan, with long, silky ears and eyes that could laugh and cry real tears. Champ

belonged to Roland. He was a beautiful collie with soft, amber-colored eyes and hair long and glossy. And didn't those dogs just love a picnic!

"Pretty soon we came to the woods. The dogs went bounding off after the rabbits and squirrels. Dad and the boys took their poles and went a little way off to fish. Mother and I sat under the trees and talked, while Betty Jean and Sambo played together near by.

"After a while it was time to eat. We got the lunch and spread it on the big canvas. My! you never saw such a lunch. Fried chicken and sandwiches and stuffed eggs and chocolate cake and dates and candy and—*everything!* It just makes my mouth water now when I think about that lunch," said Aunt Emma.

"We were just ready to begin on that delicious feast when we heard Bob barking furiously.

“ ‘He’s treed something, I expect,’ said Dad.

“ ‘A porcupine!’ echoed Phil and Roland in the same breath.

“Bob had always had a curiosity about porcupines, it seems, but had never gotten close to one, as Phil had usually been along and had always kept him a safe distance from the prickly little creature.

“We were all curious to see if it was a porcupine that was causing the rumpus, so we left the picnic banquet and followed Phil and Roland. Away we all went, Sambo too, kicking up his black heels and wagging his funny, woolly tail gayly.

“Sure enough, when we reached the spot, there was Bob, backed up against the open end of a hollow log, barking at a porcupine an arm’s length away. The poor porcupine was trying to get to his nest, which, we learned afterward, was in the log where Bob had planted himself.

“The queer little creature was all bristled out and looked like a huge pin-cushion full of long needles.

“Bob was tormenting him by barking and snapping at him and coming as near to him as he dared.

“Phil wanted to call Bob off, but Dad said he might as well learn his lesson about porcupines sooner as later. Dogs, you know, like boys and girls, sometimes have to learn through suffering,” Aunt Emma added.

“Suddenly Bob made a quick movement toward the porcupine and he must have touched it, for, quicker than you could wink an eye, he drew back. With a howl of pain, he came whining and limping to Phil, while the porcupine disappeared into the hollow log.

“Poor Bob! He rolled over and over at Phil’s feet, trying to get the smarting quills out of his nose. And poor Phil!



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The queer little creature was all bristled out

He nearly cried too, when he saw the big tears rolling down Bob's face.

"Dad and Fred pulled the cruel quills out as carefully as they could. And, really, Bob was as brave as a dog could be who has his nose full of porcupine quills.

"All this time Champ sat a little way off, with his head cocked and a wise look in his amber eyes. He had once played

tag with a porcupine, too, when he was a puppy, and he had never forgotten that day. Since then, whenever he met a porcupine, he headed the other way.

“Well,” said Aunt Emma, “we were all so busy with poor Bob that we didn’t notice that Sambo and Betty were playing by the log where the porcupine had disappeared.

“All at once we heard an awful hulla-baloo. We hurried over and there was Sambo with his black nose full of porcupine quills too.

“ ‘Sambo smelled the kitty’s tail!’ wailed Betty, pointing toward the log. “Sure enough, there was the tip-end of the porcupine’s tail sticking out of the log. We understood perfectly,” laughed Aunt Emma. “Sambo’s curiosity had got the best of him. He couldn’t resist meddling with the end of that funny tail.

“Well, we carried the little black fel-

low over and laid him on the grass beside Bob. Such a bleating and baa-ing you never heard, as Mother and I pulled the sharp stickers out of his soft little nose.

“By this time Bob was all right and Dad and the boys had gone over to the car.

Pretty soon they came back with a big wooden box.

“ ‘What are you going to do with the box?’ we asked.

“ ‘We’re going to get that porcupine,’ answered Dad.

“And get him they did,” said Aunt Emma, “and this is how.

“While Dad held the box, Phil and Roland tipped the log up and shook it very hard until the porcupine slipped out into the box. Then Dad clapped the lid on.

“So,” said Aunt Emma, “we gathered up the fried chicken and the rest of the

good things and started for home with Bob between Phil's knees and sad little Sambo curled up on Betty's lap. The porcupine was tied on behind.

"Some picnic," laughed Aunt Emma, "but I wouldn't have missed it for anything.

"They took the porcupine home and built him a nice pen and named him 'Stickers.'

"They still had him when I left for home," she added, "but the other day I got a letter from Phil. He told me they had taken Stickers back to his woodland home and turned him loose.

" 'He wasn't happy caged up,' Phil wrote. " 'Anyway, Aunt Emma, you can't tame a porcupine, and what's the good of having a pet that you can't teach to love you?' "

Aunt Emma smiled as she finished the story.

“I’m glad they let Stickers go,” she said. “If he had been meant for a pet, he wouldn’t have been given those queer, sharp, dangerous barbed spines.”

And now, in closing this story, let me tell you that you must never kill a porcupine unless you are lost and in need of food.

Because the meat is good for food and because the porcupine can be so easily caught, many a lost hunter’s life has been saved by this harmless little creature.

Never forget this law of the woods.



Courtesy of the U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey

The rabbits' coats are about the color of the fields about them

STUBBY TAIL

STUBBY TAIL was a wild cottontail rabbit. His home was a clump of willows that grew close to a little creek.

Here Mother Cottontail had made her nest of weeds and dried grass. It was a warm, cozy nest, lined with fur which she had pulled from her own little body.

There were five of the baby rabbits.

Each little fellow had a tan-gray coat, thin silken ears and eyes set so that he could see both ways at once.

On a June day one of these rabbit children had an adventure. And if it hadn't been for the kind little boy who found him and put him back in his nest, it would have been the end of him.

The little boy told me the story and I wrote it down in his own words. Black-eyed Johnny loves animals and he wants to tell you this story.

First let me tell you a few interesting things about these timid, wild creatures that are found in every part of our country.

The cottontail has many cousins, you know. There is the jack rabbit, who looks a great deal like the cottontail. But he is larger and his hind hopping feet are much stronger.

When he is chased by dogs or startled

the jack rabbit goes bounding over the fields in swift, graceful leaps. He can jump many times his own height. If you want some fun, try being a jack rabbit. See if you can jump the distance of your own height.

Some rabbits burrow in the ground and make their nests far underground. Their babies are born blind and have almost no hair on their little bodies at first.

Then there is the snowshoe rabbit. In winter he is as white as the snow itself. But in summer his coat is the color of the fields where he lives. When winter comes again, he changes to his snow-white coat. And he gets a brand new pair of fur snowshoes for his hind hopping feet each winter, too. These keep him from sinking into the snow as he bounds away from his enemies.

Mother Rabbit feeds her babies just as a cat does her kittens. For the first few

weeks they are helpless little creatures. By and by they discover they have two strong hind feet and that those feet were made for hopping. Then Mother Silk Ears knows it is time to teach them the rabbit wisdom that they will soon need.

Rabbits talk by the sign language. Rubbing noses is one way. I have always wondered what secrets they are telling each other when they rub noses together. Such funny, snubby, wiggling little noses.

The first lesson a mother rabbit teaches her babies is to “freeze” to the ground when she gives the signal. These signals are made by thumping on the ground with her strong hind feet. The baby rabbit soon learns that these are danger signals.

The rabbits’ coats are about the color of the fields about them. They seem to know that if they “go dead”—lie low and very still—the enemy will not be likely to see them.

When the wild mother hears a strange sound, she thumps the ground hard with her hind feet. A little rabbit knows that sound just as you know your mother's voice. At once he freezes to the ground and lies perfectly still until the danger is past. Then he scampers to his mother in answer to more thumps.

It is a pretty sight to see a family of cottontails feeding on the grass about their nests in the evening or early morning. Their little turned-up tails look like tiny white powder puffs blown about in the wind, as they hop here and there.

And now comes the story of Stubby Tail. I wrote it down just as Johnny told it to me.

He told me about the fun he and his cousin Sam had on his Uncle Jack's ranch, too. Such jolly good times riding horseback and going swimming, herding sheep and turkeys, milking the cows, gathering

eggs and all the things that boys do on a ranch. It made me wish every boy I know could spend a summer on a ranch.

Well, here is the story of Stubby Tail and I wish you could have seen Johnny's black eyes shine when he told me about that little runaway rabbit child.

"The very next day after school was out last June, Dad took me up to Uncle Jack's ranch in his new car. It is about a hundred miles from the city and is known as *Loma Alta Ranch*. It is away up in the foothills of California. At night when you go to sleep you can hear the cowbells tinkling off in the hills, and the stars look like they are just a little way off.

"We started for the ranch early that morning, before the sun was up. But no matter how early you get up, it seems as if you can never beat the birds and squirrels.

“A mother quail had her children out hunting their breakfasts alongside the road. As soon as she heard us, she gave a funny, low call and in one second there wasn’t a quail in sight. Every one of them disappeared as if by magic.

“We saw a billy owl sitting on the fence, too. Dad stopped and I got out and went over and looked at him close. He looked so funny and wise as he blinked his big, round eyes at me. He could twist his head nearly all the way around, too.”

“And a mother skunk took her family of kittens across the road right in front of us. Luckily for us, Dad saw her in time. Would you think that such a pretty creature could carry such a scent bag?

“As soon as the mother skunk got across the road, we started on. Suddenly, just as we rounded a curve, Dad threw on the brakes. I nearly fell off the seat. A little baby cottontail rabbit hopped out in the



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A little baby cottontail rabbit

road, right in front of us. The front wheel almost struck him. We both saw him at the same time.

“He lay there so still, we thought at first he had been hit. But he was only playing dead, as his mother had taught him to do. When I picked him up, his little heart was beating wildly. I held him against my cheek and he wiggled his nose as if he were trying to tell me something. Then

he snuggled down into my hands and shut his eyes. He seemed to know he had found a friend.

“He was only about four inches long and Dad said he could not have been more than two weeks old. His little gray coat was as soft as silk and his tiny, turned-up tail looked like a piece of cotton sticking to him.

“We tried to give him some milk which we had brought along in the thermos bottle. I held him and Dad put the cup to his mouth. At first he kicked it away with his feet. By and by he got a taste of the milk and then you should have seen him go after it with his little pink tongue.

“Dad thought if we put him in the grass inside the fence, his mother would soon find him. But when I put him down, he looked so little and so lonesome that I begged Dad to try and find his nest. I just couldn’t leave him alone. Dad thought



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Sure enough! There was the fur-lined nest, with four baby cottontails in it

the nest must be in the willows along the creek, as rabbits always nest in the bushes.

“We parked the car and climbed through the wire fence. By and by we came to a place where the grass was eaten off clean for quite a space around a clump of willows. Dad was sure the rabbits had

done it. We pushed aside the bushes and peeked in. Sure enough! There was the little fur-lined nest, with four of the dearest baby cottontails you ever saw. And every one of them was just like that little runaway in my hands.

“I put him into the nest with his brothers and sisters and wasn’t he glad to find his folks! He hopped around, rubbing noses with every one of them. Maybe he was kissing them. Or he may have been telling them about the wonderful world beyond the wire fence—I don’t know.”

Johnny said the cunningest thing about that little rabbit was his stubby, turned-up, cotton tail. And so we named him *Stubby Tail*.

And Johnny wondered if Mother Silk Ears ever knew that one of her children had an adventure—and *which* one.

SMILES

THE silver fox is the king of fur bearers. His precious pelt is so valuable that it is worn only by the rich and royal.

When our country was new, the woods were full of these beautiful animals and hundreds of trappers made their living by trapping them. But now great cities stand where once the foxes roamed and these precious fur bearers are becoming very scarce.

For that reason many silver foxes are now raised on fox farms, by men who make a study of fur farming.

Many of these farms are in the Pacific northwest. See if you can find this part of the country on the map. It extends from northern California on up through Oregon, Washington and Canada.

It was on the Golden Gate Fox Farm, a

few miles from San Francisco, that I found the beautiful silver fox, "Smiles."

Perhaps you think that is a queer name for a fox, but it seems that this fox really smiles.

The manager of the farm is Mr. Haskin. He is a tall, quiet man with kind gray eyes and a big, crooked smile. He has about a hundred foxes on his farm and he loves every one of them. He calls them all by name and talks to them just as you would to your dog.

When I asked him to tell me a fox story to put in this little book, he thought a moment. Then he said, "Come, I'll show you my fox children first. If you can pick out Smiles, I'll tell you her story."

He filled his pockets with dried figs and I followed him, wondering if I should know Smiles when we came to her.

First he took me to the playground. He explained that foxes love to play and that

they must be allowed to have their fun or they will become discontented and unhappy. They must also be allowed to run and exercise, he said, in order to keep healthy.

The playground is a large grassy space enclosed with wire netting. Here a dozen young foxes were having the time of their lives.

Some were running races. Some were chasing their tails. Others were rolling and tumbling over each other like a lot of happy puppies.

One seemed to be trying out his skill as a high jumper. He would leap into the air like an athlete, looping his supple body in graceful curves and landing on his feet as lightly as a kitten.

But the pet sport was the whirligig. It was a large revolving disc in the center of the playground. Possibly you have ridden on one of these fun-makers at a carnival sometime.

This whirligig was kept whirling by the weight and motion of the foxes as they raced round and round at lightning speed. The faster they ran, the faster went the whirligig.

When a fox fell off, he would get up, watch his chance and leap back on.

It was a pretty sight, as well as a funny one. The foxes looked like black streaks against the sunlight, as they whirled and leaped and fell.

And I must tell you about the champion whirler. He was the only one who did not fall off. He knew just how to balance himself and how to sway with the motion of the whirligig.

And, would you believe it? Three of those young rascals got their foxy noses together and decided to crowd the winning fox off. But he was too clever for them. He was the undisputed "champ" of the whirligig and he knew it.

I was so fascinated with the antics of those youngsters that I could hardly leave the playground. But I was anxious to find Smiles and get the story. And so we left the playground and started the rounds of the pens.

There were about fifty of these pens. In each was a pair of foxes. It seems that foxes have their favorites just as people have and are much happier if they are allowed to choose their own mates and playfellows.

As we approached the pens, the foxes came running to the fence for their afternoon treat of dried figs. When they saw a stranger with their master, they slunk away and looked at me with distrust in their curious, inquiring eyes.

When they discovered the Red Fox scarf which I was wearing, they disapproved of me even more. One of them stole slyly up to the fence and gazed wonderingly

into the glassy eyes of my Alaskan captive. I wondered what his thoughts were as he sniffed at it, and then backed off with suspicion in his eyes.

Finally we came to the last pen. Suddenly a yelp of delight greeted us as a streak of silver shot into view. What a beautiful creature she was! From the end of her pointed nose to the milk-white tip of her arched tail, she was perfect.

Her black, silver-tipped fur glistened in the sunlight. Her topaz eyes gleamed like fiery gems against black velvet.

When her master opened the gate, she leaped upon him with a joyous bark and wound herself about his neck. Then she peeked slyly around his shoulder at me, a happy grin on her cunning, pointed face.

I knew, without a doubt, that it was Smiles.

And presently, out of the bedroom corner, trotted her lovely mate, Shadow. He



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From the end of her pointed nose to the milk-white tip of her
tail, Smiles was perfect

was well named, too, I thought, for, being much larger and darker, he looked like a beautiful, black shadow beside his lovely queen.

And while Smiles and Shadow feasted from the hand of their master, he told me the story. He said I might write it in this little book for you boys and girls to read.

There were five of them—Smiles and

her four brothers. The day they were born their beautiful young mother disowned them. Sometimes wild mothers desert their young, it seems, when they are born in captivity. One by one, she picked the blind, helpless fox babies up in her mouth and carried them to the far corner of the pen. There she left them—motherless. She would have nothing to do with them and the poor little orphans would have died if it hadn't been for another mother on the Golden Gate Fox Farm.

Snowball was the name of the white Persian cat that adopted the five fox children. She had two fluffy little kittens of her own beside the fox babies.

And so for months Snowball mothered her stepchildren just as she did her own, until they were old enough to feed themselves.

And every day Snowball gave them a "tongue" bath. She insisted on a daily



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Smiles's lovely mate, Shadow

bath for every one of her children. Sometimes, Mr. Haskin said, the foxes objected to the rub down. Then there was trouble. But Snowball always won out. She would cuff them soundly until they consented to have their fur washed, cat fashion.

So, with Snowball for a foster mother,

they grew into fine, healthy foxes. But Smiles was the finest of the lot and became the darling of the pens. She was the pet of the farm.

Every morning after breakfast Smiles and Shadow have a frolic. Sometimes Smiles plays with little Carol Haskin, who is just four years old. Carol takes a rope or small branch and drags it on the ground and Smiles pounces on it and plays with it as if it were some live thing. But she is very gentle with the little girl and never hurts her nor plays roughly with her.

There are two things of which Smiles is very much afraid. One is a camera. The other is a dog.

Once she was taken to the State fair. Suddenly, without warning, she sniffed the air, then in terror she crawled inside of her master's coat and hid. Mr. Haskin could not imagine what had frightened

her until he discovered a collie dog half a block away. It was quite a while before Smiles could be persuaded to come out again.

“How much would you take for Smiles?” I asked Mr. Haskin.

He stroked her glossy fur as she wound herself closer about him.

“Why,” he said slowly, “I wouldn’t sell Smiles—not for all the money—in—the—world.”

And I knew he spoke the truth. As we left the beautiful Silver Queen and her black Shadow, I looked back. The smile was fading from her charming face, but, in her amber eyes shone the magic light that is the love language of the children of the wild.



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Coons are curious creatures

SANKY

THIS is the story of Sanky, the coon. It was told to me by a little black boy who lives away down South where the cotton grows. In summer he goes off to the cotton fields and picks the snow-white cotton. In winter he is errand boy down at a southern beach hotel.

I met him there last winter. And my,

wasn't he grand in his scarlet uniform and cap! He is just twelve and as straight and tall as a slender sapling.

They called him "Happy"—just Happy. And no wonder, for he was brimful of chuckles and seemed to be trying to hold back a laugh all the time.

Wherever Happy was, there was always a crowd of children. One day I asked a little boy what made all the children love Happy so.

"Oh," he said, "it's always fun where Happy is. He knows all about alligators and snakes and turtles and fish and birds and 'possums and coons and all the animals that live in these swamps and woods."

"Does he really?" I asked.

"Yes," he declared, "and this afternoon we are going down to the beach with him and he is going to tell us a story about a real live coon he once caught."

Right then I made up my mind to get an invitation to that beach party.

“Oh, dear,” I sighed, “I’ve never heard a story about a coon—not a really true story. Won’t you ask Happy if I can come along this afternoon?”

My little friend hesitated.

“He’s kind of bashful around ladies,” he explained, “but I’ll ask him.” And away he ran.

“Tell Happy I’ll bring along the lunch if he’ll let me come,” I called after him.

Pretty soon he was back.

“Happy says, ‘Sure you can come and will you please bring some ’lasses candy like you brought the other day?’ ”

“I’ll be there with the ’lasses candy,” I promised. “Where do we meet?”

“Down on the beach, at two o’clock, by the leaning palm tree.” And away he scampered.

I could hardly wait. Long before the

time, I was there, with the biggest chocolate cake and a box of molasses taffy.

Pretty soon, here they came, nine of them—six boys and three girls. I was glad there were some girls. It made me think of the Pied Piper story, to see those boys and girls all following after Happy.

We decided to have the lunch first. Well, in about two shakes of a rabbit's tail, there wasn't a crumb of that chocolate cake left nor a speck of the candy.

Then Happy propped himself up against the leaning palm and began the story of Sanky, the coon. The right name is really raccoon, you know, but everyone calls it "coon" for short.

HAPPY'S STORY OF THE "COON CHILE"

"Seems like just the other day that my pa and me found Sanky. If you all never seen a baby coon, you ain't seen nothin' cute, yet," began Happy.

“I was just a little boy then, 'bout nine years old. My pa and me was fishin' that Sunday, in Swamp Creek, a couple o' miles from our house. After while, I got tired fishin' and I went up stream a way to see if I could find some turtle eggs. Lots of turtle eggs in Swamp Creek and I know just where, too.

“By and by I see some coon tracks. I know coon tracks, 'cause they look just like a baby's foot—just 'zactly like a baby's foot, heel and toes and all. You know that is 'cause a coon puts his whole hind foot down flat when he walks. He don't walk on his toes like a dog or cat. He walks like a bear.

“But those were the littlest coon tracks I ever see in my life. Only 'bout an inch and a half long. ‘Must be a water fairy round here,’ I say to myself. But I knew all the time it was a baby coon.

“Pretty soon I hear the most terrible



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The prettiest little coon

racket in the trees over my head. It sound as if all the bluejays in the world was havin' a quarrel.

"I look up in that big cottonwood tree and there was the cutest baby coon, 'bout as big as a kitten. He had been makin'

a raid on the birds' nests. Coons love birds' eggs, you know. The bluejays were flyin' all 'round him, tryin' to pick out his eyes.

"I made up my mind to get that coon and take him home for a pet. I climbed up the tree and crawled out on the limb where he was. He was so busy fightin' off the birds, he didn't see me. His back was toward me and 'fore he knew I was there, I had that coon chile by the tail.

"Oh, how that baby did cry! And when his mammy answered him, it made my hair stand on end, 'cause that is the worst sound in the world, when a mother coon calls to her child.

"I skinned down that old tree with that cryin' coon inside my coat. I ran like the wind till I came to the place where my pa was fishin'. I didn't look 'hind me once for fear that old coon was after me.

" 'What you all got under your coat, chile?' my pa asks.

“When I showed him, he laughed and laughed. ‘That’s the prettiest little coon I ever see,’ he told me, ‘and, I declare, he looks just like Grandpappy Sanky, with his gray hair and his black eyes. What you all goin’ to do with him?’

“ ‘I’m goin’ to keep him for my pet,’ I told him, ‘and I guess I’ll call him Sanky, ’cause he *do* look like Pappy Sanky.’

“My pa said the little fellow was about six months old. He was ’fraid he was too young to take away from his mammy. Coons stay with their mothers till they are about a year old.

“But I knew what coons eat and I promised to take care of him. One of my friends, Ulysses Brown, had a pet coon and I said I would ask him all about how to take care of this baby coon.

“After ’while Pa gave in and we went along home. But when my ma saw him, she just threw her hands up in the air.

“ ‘Law sakes, Happy,’ she said, ‘you can’t keep that coon chile. Coons is too full of mischief. That coon of ‘Lysses Brown’s got his nose into everything. He opens all the cupboard doors and boxes and he has to be rocked to sleep every night, too. Besides, who is goin’ to take care of this coon chile when you am down to the big hotel?’

“I hadn’t thought of that. And all the time Sanky was cryin’ and whinin’ like a human baby.

“At last I gave in. I begged ma to let me keep him till the next day and promised to take him back to his home in the mornin’.

“ ‘All right, but remember, he goes back to-morrow,’ she said. ‘Anyhow, don’t you all know it’s wicked to steal a baby away from his mammy?’

“I promised that I would take him back to-morrow, sure. Just then Sanky spied

a cricket crawlin' long on the floor. He stopped cryin' and his black eyes got bright like beads as he watched the cricket. Pretty soon he jumped right out of my arms and hopped on that bug before you could wink your eye. Then he walked over to the corner and started whinin' again.

"I put some cornmeal mush and milk in a bowl and tried to feed him, but he wouldn't have it. Then I remembered that coons are very fond of anything bright and shiny. Sometimes hunters hang a piece of tin over a trap on a log and it attracts the attention of the coon in the moonlight. Coons prowl at night, you know, for food. I have heard that a coon will stand on his hind feet and amuse himself by strikin' the shining metal just to see it twirl. Of course he is so interested in his plaything that he does not see the trap and usually gets caught.

“So I got a shiny tin cup and put the cornmeal mush in it and set it down in front of Sanky. Then I hid behind the door to see what he would do.

“Coons are curious creatures. By and by he came over and walked all around the cup. Then he looked inside. Next he put his hands, both of them, right down in the cup and brought them up full of mush. He took a little taste and then he went for it and ate it every bit.

“You know a coon’s front paws are just like hands. There are four long, thin fingers and a little thumb. They look like ladies’ fingers. And there is no hair on the palms, either. Just black skin that looks like a black kid glove.

“After Sanky had his supper, I made him a soft bed in the corner he had picked out for himself. Then I got a little rope and tied him to a chair. I was ’fraid he might run away in the night.



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A coon's front paws are just like little hands

“But jus’ try and keep a rope on a coon. He hasn’t any neck, you know. His head grows right out of his body. So Sanky took his paws and slipped the rope off jus’ as fast as I could put it on.

“I couldn’t bear to leave him sittin’ there alone all night, so I decided to take him to bed with me. He tucked his little pointed nose down close to me and whined softly, just like a lonesome baby. I tried to comfort him but he only cried harder. Right then I promised that coon chile something.

“Right out loud I said, ‘Sanky, if you’ll stop your cryin’, I’ll take you home to your mammy to-morrow. And listen, Sanky,’ I says, ‘I’ll never steal another animal baby away from his mammy again as long as I live. No—not *never*.’

“I think he understood ’cause he rolled himself up into a little fur ball, with his pretty ringed tail wrapped around him

and he went to sleep for a little while.

“In the morning, I got up and gave him some mush and eggs for breakfast. Coons eat almost everythin’, but they love eggs best.

“After breakfast, I put him under my coat and started for the woods, to find Sanky’s mammy.

“As we came into the woods, he poked his pointed little nose out and sniffed the air. His eyes got full of twinkles. He knew those woods and he knew he was goin’ home.

“First thing I know, I was followin’ along the stream, lookin’ for the tree where I found Sanky, and I came up on a funny sight. There was a full-grown coon sitting on the bank sousin’ a dead rabbit up and down in the creek. You know, coons won’t eat any meat unless they wash it first. Wild coons or tame ones, they all have that habit.



© Ewing Galloway

I knew it was Sanky's mamma

“I hid behind the grapevines and watched that old coon souse that rabbit up and down in the creek. She had it in both her hands and she washed it and washed it. Then she tore it apart and ate it.

“All at once, Sanky discovered her. He gave a pitiful cry and she heard him. Her

terrible screech made me shiver. I knew it was Sanky's mammy.

"I put him down on the ground and watched them from behind the vines. In about two shakes of their fluffy ringed tails, they skinned up the Cottonwood tree together. I saw the hole where they disappeared and I knew that was where their nest must be. So I climbed up and looked in.

"Away down deep, in the heart of that old hollow tree, was the prettiest sight I ever see in my born days. There was that old coon and six little fur balls all rolled up together.

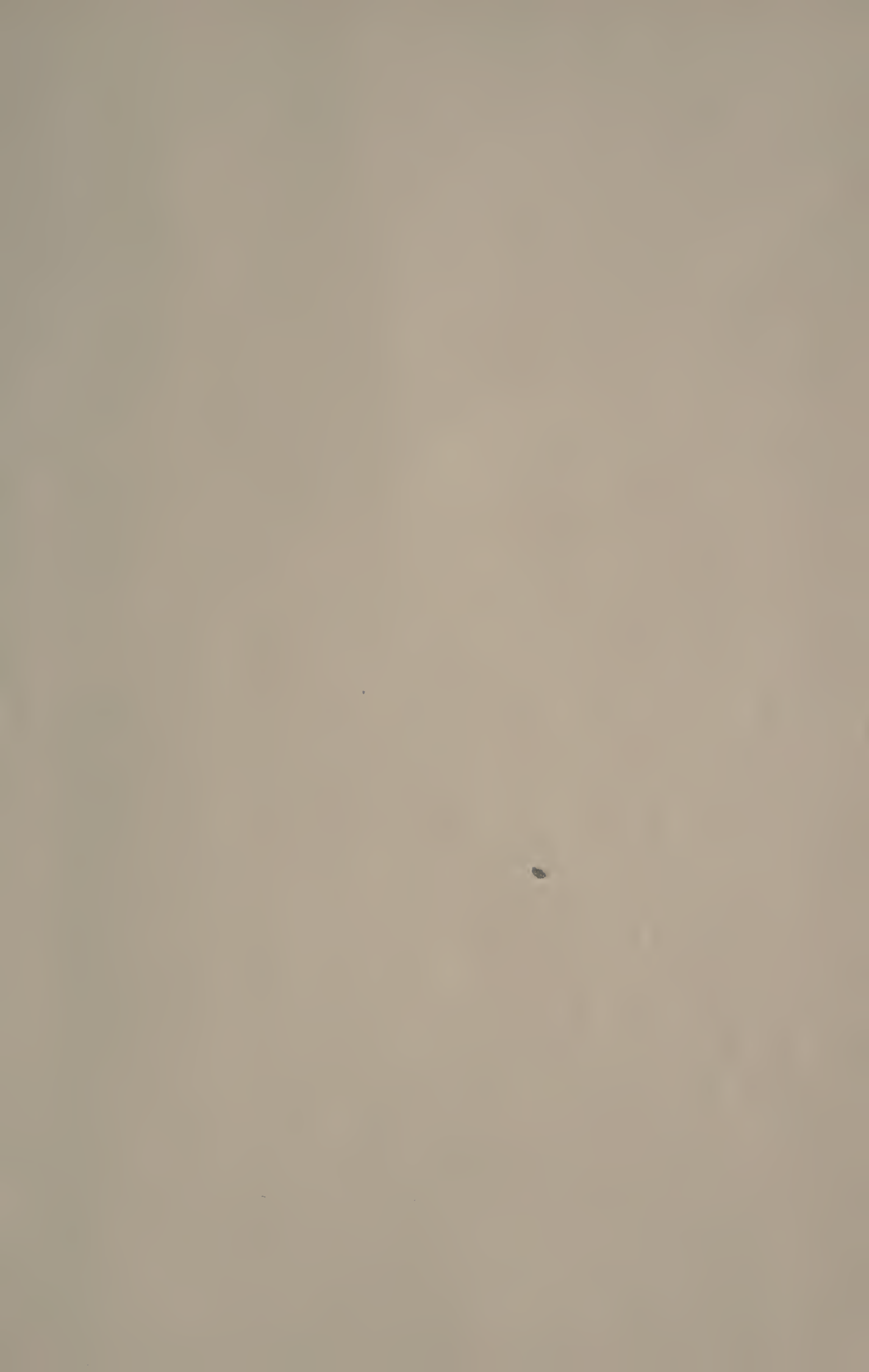
"I never made a sound 'cause I knew that one of those fur balls was awful sleepy.

"I just climbed down and went away. And as long as I live, I'll never steal another baby animal away from his mammy. No—not *never*."

And I know now what made the children love Happy. And I like to think about the little black boy, away down South, who promised Sanky he'd never steal another animal baby away from his mammy. "No—not *never*."

And so we will leave the children of our wilds with their wild mothers who love them as your own mother loves you.

If you watch these children of the woods and study their ways, you will learn to love them. In some strange way, they will know that you are their friend. And once they are sure of your friendship, their eyes will shine when they hear your voice and their wild hearts will beat fast with joy at your coming.



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